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ABSTRACT

Food waste, student rejection of Type A meals, and the difficulty of keeping school food service departments in the black have been the three major problems in the school lunch program. The Las Vegas Fast Food Combo Program provides an answer. By providing the foods students want to eat--foods of the type advertised everywhere--and making that food nutritionally sound, schools can solve all three problems easily. (Author/PGD)

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Speech given by Len Fredrick at the National School Boards Association 38th Annual Convention held in Anaheim, California April 1, 1978, Clinic Session A-11.

HOW TO MAKE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS PAY

I want to thank you for inviting me here today to talk to you about school lunches. The topic of our meeting here is "How to Make School Lunch Programs Pay." The number one way to do this is to make your school luncheteria A FUN PLACE TO EAT. How do you do this? You do it with the introduction of "Fast Food Combo" school lunches.

In my presentation to you, I want to answer the following questions:

1. Do school lunch programs have to be a burden on the budget of the school district?
2. Can Type A lunches taste good?

In 1976, 29 fast food chains spent over a quarter billion dollars on advertising. They aim their advertising at children, teenagers, and young adults and in the process, like it or not, they have revolutionized a nation's eating habits. They created a demand not simply for a type of food, but a style of eating... and that spells fast food in anybody's language.

With Big Macs, tacos, pizza, french fries and shakes sizzling in every teenager's head, how are you ever going to interest them in meat loaf, mashed potatoes and green beans? ... "Hey man, that Type A lunch is not for me... I'm a today person," says the average young adult... You are not going to get space age teenagers to eat a horse and buggy lunch.

EA 010 627

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Len Fredrick

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

The other day I saw a cartoon in our local paper that portrays the low esteem students have for the conventional school lunch. The cartoon shows a boy and a girl on their way to school. The boy says, "I hear the government has been conducting experiments in the school cafeteria. They've been feeding laboratory rats our school lunches." The girl asks, "What have they found out?" And the boy replies, "97% of the rats have started bringing their own lunches!" Typical institutional meals are not the number one preference with students, or for that matter, even with adults.

Many people believe that if a medicine doesn't taste bad it isn't good for you. Likewise, many foodservice directors believe that if you give students food they like it can't be good for them.

I say give students the foods they want and will eat, even the lunch that's number one with every teenager--a milk shake, an order of french fries, and a hamburger. The way we make it, it's good for them. We also offer them 15 other fast food lunches that are also very nutritious and we offer all of them every school day of the year. They are all Type A lunches, too!

Dr. Howard Appledorf, Associate Professor at the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, is also an official scientific lecturer for the Institute of Food Technologists. He is a believer in the nutritional value of fast foods and has been bringing this message home from coast to coast.

In a recent letter from Dr. Appledorf he wrote, "I recently addressed the California School Food Service Association in San Diego and echoed your sentiments. I suggested they follow your lead and replace "wasted" Type A meals with more relevant meals

from tacos to burgers. As you can imagine, not all of the attendees agreed, but the point must be repeated. I make my statements on the basis of eight years of compositional studies of fast foods done at the University of Florida."

Over 700 people from school districts in 48 states and Canada have made inquiries either by phone, by letter, or in person about our Fast Food Combo Program that has been so successful in our school luncheterias in Las Vegas. Because of this nationwide interest, CBI Publishing Company of Boston, Massachusetts asked me to write a book about our innovative school lunch program. My talk today comes largely from Chapter 1 of this book which is titled Fast Food Gets an "A" in School Lunch. The other 15 chapters in the book detail how to implement a fast food program, but from what I am going to tell you today, you will get an overall picture of the fast food program in school lunches including just how we put our school lunch program on a paying basis and then some.

SHOW BOOK

Even though my book is copyrighted, I give all non-profit school districts everywhere the privilege to use all the ideas, formulas, recipes, posters, plans, etc., that appear in my book.

Food waste, getting teenagers to eat a Type A meal, and keeping school foodservice departments in the black have been the three biggest bugaboos in the school lunch program. These three pressing problems have given foodservice directors, school trustees, and superintendents everywhere many sleepless nights. The irony of this situation is that all of these problems have been entirely unnecessary. But all is not lost. There is a breath of fresh air blowing in the school lunch program. This fresh air is ushering in a revolutionary and innovative approach to feeding our teenagers. It is the "Fast Food Combo" concept being adapted to the school cafeteria, making it a real FUN PLACE TO EAT.

According to statistics quoted by the American School Food Service Association, there were slightly over 4.8 billion Type A school lunches served in the United States in the 1976-77 school year. This breaks down to approximately 28 million students eating a school lunch every day. About 65% or 18 million of these students are in grades 1 through 6 and only about 9½ million in grades 7 through 12. Simple arithmetic shows us that about 8.5 million secondary school students have dropped out of the school lunch program.

In other words, when students move into junior high and high school, they are no longer "turned on" by the conventional plate-of-the-day school lunch program. They want to choose the food they eat just as they choose their friends, their classes, and their activities.

This is why I have zeroed in on the secondary schools in my book and also in my speech here today. Yes, it's in our secondary schools where participation in the Type A school lunch is down to 10 to 15% with paying students in many school districts throughout the country.

Does it have to be that these 8.5 million teenage students drop out from the school lunch program when they leave elementary school? Do our trash cans have to be full of discarded food? Do school lunch programs have to operate in the red? The answer to all of these questions is no. But to reverse this trend of teenage lunch dropouts, food waste, and red ink, our conventional antiquated methods of feeding students must be replaced with modern, innovative concepts. It is not an impossible task, and I would like to share with you my ideas on how we can get them back into the school cafeterias and keep food out of those trash cans.

I must confess at this point that I am nothing but a retired business administrator. Before I took the job as Foodservice Director for Clark County School District five and a half years ago, I had never prepared a Type A school lunch in my life, even though I had over 30 years of executive experience in nearly every other facet of the food industry. But what at first appeared to be a handicap later turned out to be a blessing in disguise for I was able to view the situation from a new perspective and implement innovative ideas to accomplish the main purpose of the school lunch program: to get more students to eat a nutritious and healthful lunch.

Raising participation, serving nutritional meals, eliminating food waste, giving the kids the foods they want, and staying in the black is a school foodservice director's dream and I believe the dream of every school board member also. This was our dream--an impossible dream to many--yet our dream came true. This dream can come true with any school district even if money--or the lack of it--is the biggest problem.

I agree with Philip Gramm, Professor of Economics at Texas A & M, that money does not solve problems; ideas solve problems. We have had the good fortune to be successful in the many bold and innovative ideas we put into our foodservice operation in the last few years. As a result, student participation in our Type A program has taken off like a kite in a March wind. Our P & L statements show that we are also building a very comfortable surplus.

I am sure you have all noticed that many secondary school students are not particularly wild about the traditional Type A meal. In an open campus situation, students often leave campus at noon just to get away--but many of them also leave to get the foods they want to eat.

We have capitalized on this. No food is so popular with young people as the All-American hamburger, french fries, and milk shake. This menu is the basis for our original Super Shake and our Nevad'n Combo--which is just another way of saying Type A meal.

We introduced the Super Shake as an alternate for the 1/2 pint of milk and the Combo as an alternate for the conventional Type A plate on the school lunch program in the fall of 1973 in all of our secondary schools. Almost overnight they were a rousing success. This prompted us to introduce a 15-Combo menu, eliminating completely the Type A plate-of-the-day when school opened in the fall of 1974. The success of this all-Combo menu has gone way beyond our most optimistic projections.

Nils Bayles, Principal of Eldorado High School here in Las Vegas says: "We have over 2,000 students in school and I believe every one of them stays on campus and eats at the school luncheteria. All the students rave about the food and say it's better than McDonald's and sells for half the price."

In the 1973-74 school year we served 3/4 of a million more lunches than the previous year. In 1974-75 we had an additional increase of one million lunches. Again, in the 1975-76 school year there was another increase of one million lunches. Though it sounds like a broken record to repeat, once again this last year we were up another million lunches.

Increased participation means increased federal reimbursement and larger volume means lower labor cost and the end result is a foodservice program showing a very comfortable surplus in every P & L statement.

Many foodservice directors are concerned with competition to their secondary school lunch program from off campus fast food restaurants. They have every reason to be worried. Way back in November of 1974 two magazines, Institutions and Nation's Schools and Colleges, cited the growing number of college campuses being invaded by commercial fast food operations and the number climbs steadily. McDonald's heads the list of invaders. Both of these magazines featured articles about how commercial fast food operations can save the school luncheteria from bankruptcy.

By the way, I believe in free enterprise and wish McDonald's and other fast food operators every success, but school foodservices can do everything they can do and make money doing it. We did it and here is how.

After surveys were conducted to see what the students were going off campus to buy, and after much consideration, we made an agonizing decision to discontinue the conventional Type A plate and go to fast foods in all of our junior and senior high school luncheterias, realizing, of course, that we also had an obligation to serve a nutritious lunch... a lunch that would meet all the requirements of a Type A lunch, thus providing students with 1/3 of their nutritional needs for the day.

We created our own version of Arby's hot roast beef sandwich and McDonald's Big Mac hamburger, and so on. We gave the new hot sandwiches catchy names such as the Big Tex'n, Big Virginian, Big Nevad'n, etc. These sandwiches were served in fancy styrofoam boxes that kept them piping hot and the boxes were dolled up with attractive labels in various colors.

The students wanted milk shakes, so we developed one that was recognized in Nevada as a Type A beverage and that could replace the conventional 1/2 pint of milk in a school lunch--a first for the nation. The students also wanted french fries so Basic American developed a french fry for us that could be deep fried and still, after cooking, meet the Type A requirements for vitamin C--another first for the nation. Then we said, "Move over, McDonald's; move over, Taco Bell; move over, Pizza Hut; move over, Arby's; move over, Frostee Freeze; and here we come!"

Soon these hot sandwiches, along with other favorite entree items, became the basis for our expanded Combo menu. Almost any sandwich can become a Type A lunch with the addition of vitamin C enriched french fries and lettuce, or a tossed green salad, plus a milk shake or milk.

High school students who normally wouldn't be caught dead eating a conventional Type A plate are eating the Combos as though they were going out of style. They are eating every bite of the sandwich and of the french fries and are drinking every last drop of the milk shake. Food waste is a thing of the past. These students don't have the faintest idea they are getting the recommended nutrition for their noon lunch and many of them couldn't care less.

What we did was take food that teenagers like and make it good for them. Remember that in the 30-year history of the National School Lunch Program, a 1/2 pint of milk had been the only beverage that could be served with a Type A lunch.

Here is a bulletin that says what the Food and Nutrition Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture thinks about the milk shake now.

"Milkshakes with lunch...

A milkshake often seems to be the magic ingredient for selling a lunch--any lunch, not only sandwich lunches. Use a formula which insures that each serving contains 8 ounces of fluid milk and the customer has a Type A beverage and doesn't even know."

Nutrition and Technical Services
USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Western Region
1-15-75

I theorized that if I could serve a milk shake that had more milk nutrients in it than there is in whole milk, I could get government approval for the milk shake and at the same time bring teenage school lunch dropouts back into the school lunch program.

Now let's look at one of the handouts you received. Look at handout #1 called The Len Fredrick Super Shake. Just see how nutritious an 8-ounce cup of Super Shake really is. Notice the larte percentage of the RDA of protein, vitamins and minerals this Super Shake contains--far more nourishment than whole milk and yet it has 7% less cholesterol.

The average teenager requires approximately 2,700 calories a day and the Len Fredrick Super Shake contains only 300, or just 11% of the daily caloric need. Yet this Super Shake provides 25% of the protein, 40% of the riboflavin, 45% of the calcium, 25% of the vitamin D, 25% of the vitamin B_{12}, 35% of the phosphorous and fair amounts of many more vitamins and minerals recommended for daily nutrition.

On the bottom of the page, compare the Super Shake with all the other milk drinks that can be served with a Type A lunch. Once again, may I repeat, the Super Shake is super as far as nutrition is concerned. In just our 26 secondary schools alone, we will serve 2 million milk shakes this year to teenagers who otherwise might have little or no milk in their diets.

Any way you look at it, the Len Fredrick Super Shake is one of the most healthful foods there is for our students. What we in Clark County School Foodservices have done is start a revolution in school feeding... a revolution not to hurt or destroy, but to build and improve.

Periodically, the nation goes through different health food fads and food scares. There are some nutritionists today who say that a fast food diet for children is horrendous. They say that to have a large share of the calories consumed come from sugar and fat and only a small share from protein is what is wrong with our diets today. Some say this kind of a diet will give one an early appointment with the undertaker.

Let's look at some interesting statistics. In 1910 the average child could expect to grow to a height of 5'5" and live to be 50 years old. Today's average child can expect to grow to a height of 5'9" and live to be 71 years old. Now if the food we are eating is poison to the system, then this must be the best poison on the market when the kids who are eating it can expect to grow 4" taller and live 21 years longer than their counterparts of 65 years ago.

What about the so called excessive use of sugars and fats in our present fast food diets? Refined sugars are merely pure forms of sugar that have been extracted from the plant foods in which they are found. Fat is one of the richest sources of energy in our diets and along with sugars they provide us with approximately 80% of our calorie requirements. Mr. Roland M. Deutsch, a recognized authority on nutrition and author of The Family Guide to Better Food and Health, says it is wrong to assume that a diet high in protein is automatically providing one with good nutrition.

Today, doctors have discovered (a little late, I think) that mother's milk from a normal, healthy mother is the finest food there is for a baby. Doctors now say that for the first six months a baby needs nothing but mother's milk. I guess the Lord knew what he was doing when he made women.

Now the shocker. What is mother's milk made of? Human milk is about 48% sugar calories, 46% fat calories, and only 6% protein calories. That's right. Therefore, we would have to conclude that the healthiest babies in the world--the breast fed ones--are on a fast food diet the minute they are born, and they stay on it exclusively for six months--for every breakfast, every lunch, and every dinner. My wife reminded me when she read my speech to include the 2:00 a.m. feeding also. I guess I must have slept right through all of those early morning feedings for all three of our children because they were all breast fed.

Seriously speaking, after receiving much information and advice from some of the leading nutritionists in our country, I can see that our diets, as nutritious as they are, can stand some improving. I have written more about this later on in my book.

Will you please turn now to handout #2,"Nutritional Information about Fast Food 'Combos.'" People think that a lunch composed of fast foods such as burgers, pizza, or tacos with french fries and shakes are excessively high in fats and low in protein. To the contrary, you will see that our fast food Combos, even with the Super Shake and french fries, actually have more protein calories and less fat calories than the average conventional meal.

In the left-hand column titled "Protein Calories," you will see at the bottom of the page that the average meal contains 12% protein calories whereas the average Combo has 16.6% protein calories or 38% more. In the next column to the right, notice that the average Combo actually has 15% less fat calories than the average meal.

Combos can even be used for low calorie diets. All a student has to do is choose the tossed green salad in place of french fries and lowfat milk in place of a milk shake.

To accomplish what we have done in Nevada we had to make many changes--do lots of innovating. When you try new ideas you must make a path where no path has been before. There are bound to be a few branches across the way--sometimes a big tree or two, but the satisfaction of accomplishment makes it all worthwhile. Not many years ago our luncheterias were half empty at noon, but now they are so crowded that many of them have had to be enlarged and modernized. This means that more students than ever before are eating nourishing Type A meals.

Our innovative concept of school lunch--the Combo with the Super Shake--is being copied by many school districts throughout the nation and soon millions of teenagers will enjoy better nutrition because of this new school lunch program. With the tremendous increase in participation in our school district, we have been able to operate in the black and still purchase modern foodservice equipment. We've also been able to keep our elementary school lunch prices of 1973 through the 1977-78 school year. In our secondary schools, we still have several Combos at only 55¢. Take our Combo #4. The students get a jumbo quarter pound sloppy joe burger plus french fries and a Super Shake for only 55¢. This same food off campus would cost a student at least $1.25 or more than twice the Combo price and we still make money on the Combo.

In Marietta, Ohio, the Board of Education voted to abolish cafeteria service because the foodservice department ran $60,000 in the red in one year and the Board said it couldn't afford this loss any longer. Closing cafeterias doesn't seem the best solution to getting out of the red. Children need to eat lunch and if they can't get a nutritious one at school, the alternative is often junk food. With a willingness to make changes and initiate good management, it is possible to have the best of two worlds: a balanced budget and nutritious school lunches that students like. The fast food concept--Combo with Super Shake--has made this possible.

Our success has not been without its problems, however. As our volume started to climb, our overhead went down and soon our deficit turned into a very sizeable surplus.

Then one day in the 1975 school year it happened. My boss, the Associate Superintendent, came into my office. He gave me a hard look and said, "What in the world are you doing with over a half million dollar surplus in your foodservice account?" He continued, "You're not in private business anymore--remember, your foodservice program is supposed to be non-profit. This large surplus can be embarrassing. Let's do something to whittle it down."

First, we got the School Board to give a special bonus raise to all of the 450 food-service employees. What happened? The employees worked harder than ever. Result: Our payroll actually decreased, but our large surplus did not decrease. Next, we got the Board to do the unthinkable thing in today's economy--reduce prices. All Type A lunches and Combos in all schools, grades 1 through 12, were reduced in price by 5¢.

What happened? Our volume continued to soar even higher, thereby further decreasing our overhead, and wouldn't you know, that embarrassingly large surplus still wouldn't go away.

Then the Board gave us permission to spend a half million dollars of foodservice money on new and replacement equipment that was badly needed in all of our kitchens. What happened? Much of this new equipment was of the labor-saving type. You guessed it. Our productivity shot up and our labor percentage cost dropped again. I guess I can't do anything right. That surplus, as big as ever, is still staring at us from all of our P & L statements. But I will not give up--I will not be called a failure.

It's now a couple of years later, and after I read you the following current financial figures, I guess I have to admit that I am a failure. That embarrassingly large surplus didn't go away--it just got bigger and bigger.

Now turn to handout #3 called Financial Earnings and Growth Patterns. Look at the top of the page where it says "Financial Earnings of the Clark County School District Foodservice Department July 1 1972 through June 30, 1977."

Expenditures out of earnings on fixtures, etc.	$1.2 Million
Net balance (cash plus inventory)	1.1 Million
Foodservice Total Earnings	$2.3 Million

At the close of the school year on June 30, 1972, the Clark County School District was fighting red figures. During the next five years, with the introduction of fast food (the Combo with the Super Shake) in our secondary schools and the "Special Today" lunches in our satellite elementary schools, the financial status of our foodservice department has turned around a full 180 degrees to the plus side of the ledger. Over these last five years, we have spent approximately 1.2 million dollars out of foodservice earnings on items like new kitchen equipment and trucks, giving us some of the most modern and efficiently operated school luncheterias in the country. Our net profit balance, not including fixture expenditures, on June 30, 1977, was approximately 1.1 million dollars.

We all know that school foodservice operations are nonprofit. But when you can show a "net earnings" on your P & L statements, this money can and should be used for some and maybe all of the following improvements in a school lunch program.

1. To help absorb inflation cost of food and supplies and thus enable lunch and breakfast prices to be kept as low as possible.
2. To improve both the quality and the quantity of food served, plus adding new items to the menu that could not otherwise be afforded.
3. To purchase new and improved equipment for school kitchens that will help to give quicker service and, in some instances, even better tasting food to the students.
4. To give a fair and deserving raise to hard working foodservice personnel.

Profit is not a dirty word. Profit can and should be used to help improve the school lunch program and to make it almost financially independent of general funds. By using our net earnings wisely, we were able to achieve a phenomenal increase in student participation in school lunch and breakfast programs.

Now look at the middle of the page on handout #3 where it says "Growth Patterns."

In the left hand column, "Type A Lunches Only," you will see that in the 1970-71 school year we served 1 million Type A lunches. Now look at the bottom of this column and for the 1976-77 school year we served over 6 million Type A lunches. This is a 500% increase in Type A participation. During the same period of time our student enrollment was only up approximately 20%.

Let's look at the column on the extreme right side of the page headed "Total Dollar Volume." For practical purposes, the Clark County School District Foodservice Department is self-supporting and therefore is not a burden on the taxpayer.

To the contrary, it makes a vital contribution to the growth and maintenance of the economy in Southern Nevada by pouring over 6 million dollars into our local economy annually in the form of wages and food and supply purchases.

We employ 350 adults who work from 4 to 8 hours a day and this work force is supplemented by nearly 800 students who work from 1/2 to 1 hour a day, plus 75 adult substitutes who are called out as needed.

Annual wages amount to over 2 1/2 million dollars and 1/3 million of this goes to the 800 student workers who are paid $2.65 an hour. Some of them earn up to $50 a month for working just 1 hour a day in junior high and high schools.

Now look at the column second from the far right headed "Federal Reimbursement." By increasing student participation in the school lunch program and also by making all a la carte items meet the Type A lunch requirements, and thus qualifying for federal reimubrsement, our revenue from the federal government has jumped from 1/4 million dollars to almost 2 1/2 million dollars, or a 900% increase. This also helps to keep lunch prices down and keeps Foodservices comfortably solvent.

Over and over I have heard administrators say they would gladly relinquish the responsibility of the school lunch program to someone who would serve students the foods they like and want, and who would keep the foodservice operation in the black. These administrators feel they have sufficient problems overseeing the academic aspect of a school district which is, of course, their primary responsibility.

There is no excuse for your school lunch program NOT to be operating on a paying basis, whether it is run by your own foodservice director or by a contracted management firm. If you should require more expertise in managing your school lunch program, please let me know. I am available as a consultant.

This coming Monday, April 3, I will be speaking at a U. S. Navy Symposium in San Diego. The subject of my speech will be "Fast Food Can Be Nutritious and Healthy." In talking with Commander Mummert, I was told that the Navy is very interested in the idea of Fast Food Combo lunches aboard the ships in the Pacific Fleet. The Commander also said that 70% of the men in the Navy are under 25 years of age. They have grown up on fast food and now are asking that fast food be served aboard ships when they are out to sea.

In closing, I want to say that I hope I have been able to show you that school lunch programs don't have to be a burden on the budget of a school district. I also hope that I have been able to convince you that a Type A lunch can really taste good, even to teenagers, provided you serve them Fast Food Combos.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.